



Abdul Amer addressing Egyptian troops last May.

Ousted War Chief A Suicide in Cairo

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CAIRO, Sept. 15 — Former Vice President Abdel Hakim Amer, charged with plotting

against his old revolutionary friend President Nasser, committed suicide by taking a "dangerous narcotic poison," it was officially announced today.

A government press spokesman said the 48-year-old field marshal and former commander in chief of the Egyptian armed forces took his life Thursday night. His body was taken to his home at Menia, a town on the Nile in Upper Egypt and buried this morning, the spokesman said.

Amer had been under house arrest since Nasser discharged him from his command following the defeat of the Egyptian armed forces in the six-day war with the Israelis in June and during the last week he has been charged in officially sanctioned stories in the newspaper Al Ahram with having plotted with other dissident officers to have himself reinstated and exonerated of the blame for the June defeat. He was said to be facing a court-martial for treason.

The news of Amer's suicide had raced through Cairo since late Thursday night but was only confirmed Friday evening at a specially called press conference. Before this members of Amer's family and friends had been seen in streets around the marshal's guarded villa wailing and crying, "He is dead, he is dead."

In Washington, Joe Alex Morris Jr., Middle East correspondent of the Los Angeles Times, wrote this appraisal of Amer's career:

Amer is the first Arab leader to fall from grace and

power in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war.

Ironically, Amer was a man best known for his fanatic dedication to his leader, President Nasser. He was one of the original plotters who formed the Free Officers who led the successful coup d'etat against King Farouk in 1952, and until his recent decline was widely considered the man closest to Nasser of all the inner circle of the Egyptian leadership.

Nasser responded to Amer's dedication by repeatedly giving him posts of authority and responsibility beyond his best friend's capabilities. Until two years ago, he was the heir apparent, and Nikita Khrushchev made him a hero of the Soviet Union at the same time he gave this top award to Nasser himself.

Amer's career as a leading member of Egypt's military junta was always tied closely to the military forces themselves. Nasser's faith and confidence in him were such that he survived as minister of war and commander-in-chief despite the 1956 Suez debacle. Similarly, he stayed on despite the humiliating inability of Egypt's powerful Soviet-equipped army to rout a motley collection of Royalist rebels in the Yemen in a four-year civil war.

Amer's most notorious setback came when Syria broke away from Egypt and the United Arab Republic in 1961. Amer was Nasser's gauleiter in the so-called northern region at the time, placed under arrest.

See MIDEAST, A1